DELCOURT

2

ROCK & STONE

JEAN + VALEANI + GEORGES

ROCK & STONE
Volume 2/2

Script
Nicolas JEAN
Art
Yann VALEANI
Colors
Gaétan GEORGES

Rock & Stone Volume 2, September 2016.
© ÉDITIONS DELCOURT
All rights reserved.

Publisher: Guy Delcourt

Editor of the original edition: David Chauvel

Digital comics editor: Jean Wacquet
Digital editions assistant: Cécile Chovet

Cover design: Trait pour Trait
Translation: Christina Cox-De Ravel
Lettering: Studio Charon

ISBN: 978-2-7560-8650-7

ARE YOU SURE IT'LL BE FINE?

OF COURSE, IT'S NO PROBLEM!

WHEN YOU HEAR "AUTOMATIC MODE ACTIVATED", **BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE**, PUSH THE NETWORK DISCONNECT BUTTON.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHICH ONE IT IS?

YEAH, THE ONE WITH THE ROUND SHAPES ON IT...

THE CONCENTRIC HALF-CIRCLES!

YEAH.

I ASKED THE SATELLITE TO WAKE ME UP IN EIGHT HOURS. I'LL SEND YOU A SIGNAL TO WARN YOU.

YOU MIGHT STILL BE ASLEEP. STAY UNDER THE CLOAK, AND MAKE SURE THAT THE AREA IS SAFE BEFORE YOU RECONNECT ME.

GOT IT.

YOU SURE YOU WON'T BE TOO COLD?

YEEEEES! C'MON, GO TO BED ALREADY! I'LL BE CAREFUL, I PROMISE.

GOOD NIGHT, STAN.

GOOD NIGHT, DAD.

SWEET DREAMS...

EARTH YEAR 2194.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS EARLIER.

TO ALL PERSONNEL, A MESSAGE FROM THE ON-BOARD COMMANDER. ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL AT CALDORIA: FOUR HOURS.

RECENTLY REANIMATED PASSENGERS SUFFERING FROM VERTIGO, PERSISTENT NAUSEA, SHAKING, OBSCURED VISION, OR HYPOTHERMIA ARE INVITED TO USE THE ASSISTANCE BUTTON SITUATED ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THEIR HIBERNATION CAPSULE.

KOFF KOFF

D. GELBSTEIN

R. FARHANE

IN ORDER TO EASE THE WORKLOAD FOR OUR MAINTENANCE CREW, ALL PASSENGERS WITH THEIR CLOTHES AND PERSONAL EFFECTS MUST PRESENT THEMSELVES WITHIN AN HOUR TO HALL A2, WHERE THEIR INVENTORY WILL BE PROCESSED, BEFORE CHECK OUT.

DANIEL GELBSTEIN?

YES, HELLO... ?

MAGNUS HOLM, CHIEF OF THE A.I.U.M. LAB. I'M THE ONE WHO PICKED YOUR RÉSUMÉ OUT.

HAD A NICE TRIP?

UH... MY MIND IS STILL FEELING A BIT CLOUDY. BUT PHYSICALLY, I'M NOT DOING TOO BADLY.

IT'S THE ELECTRIC MUSCULAR STIMULATION. WITHOUT IT, YOU'D BE IN A WHEELCHAIR.

COME, I'VE GOT A TAXI WAITING AT THE CORNER.

AND GIVE YOUR SUITCASE TO THE VALET, THAT'S WHAT IT'S FOR!

You're welcome.

NO HUMAN DRIVER? ON EARTH, THAT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN.

I KNOW. THAT'S WHY I LIVE ON CALDORIA.

THERE'S NO O.P.H.L. LOBBYISTS, NO BENDING OVER BACKWARDS FOR UNIONS...

NO MEN PAID JUST TO MAKE SURE THE LIGHT DOESN'T TURN RED.

WE'VE SET UP A ROOM FOR YOU ON SITE, WHILE WE WAIT FOR A BETTER ONE TO OPEN UP. BUT YEAH, AFTER TWO YEARS IN HIBERNATION, I'M GUESSING YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE SLEEPING RIGHT NOW?

UH... NO, NO.

C'MON, I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN URBAN MANAGEMENT

AH, HELLO, MIRA.

THIS IS DANIEL GELBSTEIN. HE'S THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO HELP US OUT ON THE M.P.A.I. PROJECT.

DANIEL, YOU SAID? PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

2203.

IT'S GOOD NEWS, ISN'T IT?

Y-YES, OF COURSE. A LITTLE SUDDEN, MAYBE...

"SUDDEN"? AFTER EIGHT YEARS TOGETHER?

WE'VE DISCUSSED IT. YOU WERE OKAY WITH IT.

OKAY WITH THE IDEA OF IT, YEAH. BUT NOW, AT THIS POINT IN MY RESEARCH... AND YOU DIDN'T TELL ME, WELL, I THOUGHT...

I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF RESEARCH TOO. BUT I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT COULD WAIT.

AND MAGNUS? DO YOU THINK HE'LL AGREE?

I DON'T CARE ABOUT MAGNUS!! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

WHAT... WAIT, I...

SORRY. I SHOULDN'T GET SO ANGRY.

IT'S JUST THAT... SOMETIMES, I THINK ABOUT THIS PLANET. EXTRACTING MINERALS TO MAKE MACHINES, TO EXTRACT MORE MINERALS, TO MAKE MORE MACHINES...

I'D LIKE TO BUILD SOMETHING ELSE. WARM, AND ALIVE. WITH YOU.

SWEETHEART...

I WANT THIS BABY. BUT YEAH, WE'RE ON CALDORIA. ONE CHILDCARE WORKER FOR EVERY TWENTY CHILDREN, WITH ROBOT ASSISTANTS...

IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH IT, I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT'D BE THE RIGHT OCCASION TO TAKE TIME OFF.

DID YOU THINK ABOUT A NAME?

IF IT'S A GIRL, I LIKE "EMILY". IF IT'S A BOY, YOU CAN CHOOSE.

WELL... WHAT ABOUT "STANLEY"?

REALLY? LET'S HOPE IT'S A GIRL, THEN...

2206.

A BITE?

GELBSTEIN? YOU OKAY?

YES, YES.

WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU AT THE BRIEFING.

OK. TWO MINUTES!

A HORSEFLY? YEAH, IT'S NORMAL THAT IT HURTS. THERE'S SOME SOOTHING CREAM IN THE MEDICINE CABINET. BUT YEAH, YOU...

VERTIGO? LISTEN, GABY SHOULD BE AT HOME. TELL HER TO COME OVER IF IT'LL HELP REASSURE YOU.

YEAH, I REALLY GOTTA GO NOW. LOVE YOU.

HOW'S MIRA? SHE OKAY?

MMM, YEAH. APPARENTLY, SHE GOT BIT BY SOME KIND OF INSECT. DAILY DRAMA, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

SHE MUST NOT BE TERRIBLY USED TO IT. SPENDING ALL HER TIME CAGED IN WITH THE KID...

OH, SHE GOES OUT FOR WALKS, SHE GOT BIT WHILE GOING OVER TO CHECK OUT THE WORK ON THE NEW HOUSE. BUT YEAH...

I THINK IT'LL DO HER SOME GOOD TO GET BACK TO WORK. NEXT YEAR, I'M HOPING.

HMM. WELL, DUTY CALLS! I'LL MEET UP WITH YOU INSIDE.

DRNNN DRN

GABY? HELLO?

WHAT?

THE HOSPITAL?

2207.

Mira Gelbstein 2167 – 2206

STILL HERE, GELBSTEIN?

I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HAD LEFT THE LIGHTS ON.

NO, I'M RUNNING SIMULATIONS. THESE THINGS TAKE AGES TO COMPILE.

MAGNUS SHOULD SPLASH OUT SOME MOOLAH ON NEW MACHINES, EH?

HE'S WORKING ON IT. HE'S ASKED H&J TO MAKE THE PROJECT A PRIORITY.

I THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE HAPPY WITH THE LATEST I.A.S. GENERATION?

YEAH? WELL, THEY WERE MISTAKEN. AND WHEN IDIOTS STICK TO THEIR GUNS, SOMEONE ALWAYS ENDS UP PAYING.

NO DOUBT.

WELL, IT'LL HAVE TO BE WITHOUT ME. I'M HEADED BACK TO EARTH TOMORROW NIGHT.

REALLY? WELL, GOOD LUCK, THEN.

OH, IT'S ALL GOOD.

OH, AND WHILE I'M ON THE SUBJECT... YOU KNOW, WE'RE REALLY LIMITED IN WHAT WE CAN TAKE AS BAGGAGE. I GOT THIS COLLECTION OF COMICS THAT I WANTED TO SELL TO STANFORD, BUT APPARENTLY, HE'S NOT INTERESTED ANYMORE. THEY'RE REALLY RARE, YOU KNOW.

COMICS?

YEAH. PAPER VERSIONS AND EVERYTHING. THE ARTIST IS A VETERAN OF THE SOL-2 WAR.

THERE'S COLLECTORS WHO WOULD PAY A FORTUNE TO HAVE 'EM, BUT... SINCE I'M ON CALDORIA, I WON'T ASK MUCH. 150 CREDITS FOR ALL OF 'EM. WOULD THAT BE OKAY? MATE'S RATES!

UH... HONESTLY, THIS SORTA THING... I'M A BIT OLD FOR IT. SORRY.

MAJOR STONE

WELL, IT DIDN'T COST ANYTHING TO ASK.

BUT HEY, WHILE I THINK OF IT... DON'T YOU HAVE A LITTLE BOY?

2213.

IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, PROFESSOR GELBSTEIN.

DID MAGNUS GIVE YOU A RUNDOWN?

UH... A QUICK ONE, YEAH. HE SAID THAT IF I HAD ANY QUESTIONS, I SHOULD JUST ASK YOU.

MMM, YEAH. LISTEN, I GOT WORK WAITING DOWNSTAIRS. WE CAN TALK WHILE I HEAD OVER THERE.

I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS A CIVILIAN PROJECT?

IT IS. BUT SOMETIMES, THERE'S UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES...

I CAN IMAGINE. PLUS, WITH ALL THIS CONTROVERSY...

WHAT CONTROVERSY?

YOU KNOW, CREATING AN A.I. THAT'S ALLOWED TO KILL... WELL, ONLY IF NECESSARY, OF COURSE...

NONSENSE.

IT'S PRETTY EASY TO UNDERSTAND.

THIS NEW GENERATION OF H.A.I. HAS BEEN CREATED TO RUN ENTIRE ZONES. CITY TRAFFIC, ENERGY DISTRIBUTION...

IMAGINE A TOXIC SPILL IN A PRODUCTION UNIT. IN LESS THAN A SECOND, THE A.I. CAN SEAL ANY CRACK, HOWEVER TINY, PROTECTING ALL THE SURROUNDING RESIDENTIAL AREAS WHILE DOING SO. IT MEANS LOSING A FEW PEOPLE TO SAVE THOUSANDS.

AND YOU ALL WANT TO PUT AN END TO IT FOR WHAT... THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE?

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, OUR H.A.I. IS ALREADY IN CHARGE OF THIS BUILDING. YOU'LL NOTICE THAT UNTIL NOW, IT'S NOT KILLED ANYONE...

AH... AND HOW LONG WILL THE TEST PHASE LAST?

THAT'LL BE UP TO YOU TO TELL ME. I NEED YOU TO MONITOR IT.

SO... IF I NOTICE ANYTHING STRANGE?

WE'LL MAKE A DECISION.

AND IF NEEDED, OF COURSE, WE'LL DISCONNECT EVERYTHING.

2214.

1A

MY GOD...

SHIT, SHIT, SHIT...

001011

NO...

GET BACK!

NO, YOU BASTARD! GET BACK! BACK!!

BLAM BLAM BLAM

URGH!

THEY GOT SIMMONS!

MAGNUS, THERE'S NO USE BEATING AROUND THE BUSH. THE H.A.I. IS COMPLETELY ENTRENCHED IN THE BUILDING. WE'LL NEED HEAVY ARTILLERY, EXPLOSIVES...

I TOLD 'EM. BUT APPARENTLY, THERE'S A PROBLEM. THEY'RE ASKING US TO EVACUATE, UNDER ESCORT.

DANIEL...

I'LL NEED YOUR HELP, BUT FIRST.

GET YOUR SON TO SHELTER.

WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

TWO MONTHS LATER.

I'VE CHECKED THREE TIMES, GELBSTEIN. I'VE BENT OVER BACKWARDS JUST SO I CAN TELL YOU THAT IT'S NOT COMING FROM US!

TORI, THAT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE! I GOT IN TOUCH WITH BASE TWO HOURS AGO. THEY MIGHT HAVE CHANGED THEIR ENCRYPTION SYSTEM...

WITHOUT WARNING US? JUST BEFORE SENDING US THE CANNON? YEAH, THAT SOUNDS COMPLETELY LOGICAL.

THEY'RE EQUIPPED TO RESIST THE MACHINES' ATTACK. AND I CAME UP WITH THEIR I.T. DEFENSES AFTER BASING IT ON H.A.I.'S PROTOCOLS.

WE CALL IT "HAIVÉ" NOW, DID YOU FORGET? VIRAL, AND EVOLVING. IT MEANS THAT IT STINKS, AND IT STICKS...

... IN MY OPINION, YOU HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA YET.

WELL, IT'S YOUR BABY. YOU MUST BE PROUD.

TORIYAMA

BE AS SNARKY AS YOU WANT, BUT MY SON IS DOWN THERE! GOT ANY CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, MAYBE?

DID YOU TRY THEIR UNENCRYPTED FREQUENCIES?

NO, BUT AT THE STAGE WE'RE AT...

00101 011 10100

SO, WHAT'S UP?

UH... HANG ON, I HAVE TO CHECK SOMETHING...

COME BACK. WE GOTTA SORT THIS OUT...

SAYONARA, PROFESSOR GELBSTEIN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I CAN HEAR THE NOISE FROM HERE. I SUPPOSE THAT'S JUST AS WELL...

OH, IT'S BEEN SORTED OUT. IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN ROT HERE.

I'D PREFER TO END THIS QUICKLY, IF IT'S FOR THE SAME RESULT...

NO!

2215.

PRESENT DAY.

W... WHAT TIME IS IT?

Eight hours twelve minutes, Caldorian time.

WHAT? YOU HAD TO WAKE ME UP AT SIX!

Survival mode – insufficient resources. Minimal rest duration – increased.

I DON'T CARE! I HAD GIVEN YOU ORDERS!

Priority – host survival.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT LATER. FIND ME STAN AND RCK1. NOW!

Search in progress...

PRAK

STRIKE!

STAN!

QUIT PLAYING AROUND, AND GIVE ME THE CONTROLS. **NOW!!**

IT'S NOT MY FAULT IF YOU WOKE UP LATER THAN PLANNED.

YEAH, RIGHT. PLUS, WANTING TO GO BOWLING, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST. OBVIOUSLY.

STAN, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND. I ALREADY HAVE TROUBLE BEING OBEYED BY THE SATELLITE A.I.

AND IF ON TOP OF THAT, I CAN'T TRUST YOU, THIS IS GOING TO BE POINTLESS.

WELL... WHY DON'T YOU JUST DISCONNECT IT? PLUS, I GUESS IT'S BEEN PIRATED BY HAIVÉ...

THERE'S NO RISK. IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK.

BUT I NEED IT. IT TAKES CARE OF ENERGY RESOURCES, SURVIVAL SYSTEMS... I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF ALL THESE THINGS MYSELF.

IN ANY CASE, WE NEED A VESSEL.

WHAT? TO DO WHAT?

TO BRING YOU OUT HERE, WHAT DID YOU THINK? WHEN WE'LL HAVE DESTROYED HAIVÉ....

AH... YOU KNOW, EVEN IF WE FIND ONE IN NEO-TOLEDO, IT WOULD SURPRISE ME IF THERE'S NOBODY LEFT TO FLY IT.

AND EARTH? ARE THEY UP TO DATE ABOUT OUR SITUATION?

YES, WE ALERTED THEM. BUT IN MY OPINION, IT'S BEST TO NOT COUNT ON THEIR HELP RIGHT AWAY.

WHY?

FIRST, BECAUSE A TRIP FROM THERE TAKES TWO YEARS.

AND ESPECIALLY, BECAUSE OF THIS...

THE PARSIFAL.

IT BROUGHT ME OUT HERE. IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS...

IS IT HAIVÉ WHO DID THIS?

MMM, YEAH.

WHEN THE PEOPLE HERE UNDERSTOOD THAT WE COULDN'T STOP IT, MANY OF THEM TRIED TO FLEE. THEY DISCONNECTED THE VESSEL FROM THE NETWORK SO ITS A.I. WOULDN'T GET INFECTED. THEY TRIED AN EMERGENCY TAKE-OFF...

AND IT DIDN'T WORK?

NO. APPARENTLY, HAIVÉ HAD CONTAMINATED THE VESSEL BEFORE IT WAS DISCONNECTED. IT DIDN'T LEAVE THEM ANY CHANCE.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE ON BOARD?

NO IDEA. A THOUSAND? TWO THOUSAND?

IN ANY CASE, I THINK EARTH GOT THE MESSAGE. AN A.I. THAT DESTROYED A VESSEL IN-FLIGHT, THAT KINDA KILLED THEIR DESIRE TO COME SAVE US...

AND HERE, ON CALDORIA... IS THERE A LOT OF PEOPLE LEFT?

ONE MOMENT, I'M PICKING UP A SIGNAL.

PUT YOUR CLOAK ON, QUICK!

VNNN

WAIT...

HUH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING? PUT THE CLOAK ON, I TOLD YOU!

NO.

VOUM

STAN! STOP! MOVE, NOW!

RCK!

CLK

ZT!

1111

DIE!

...

STAN! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!

THAT BASTARD TOOK MY FRIENDS FROM ME!

MY FRIENDS!

CALM DOWN! REINFORCEMENT ROBOTS WILL BE COMING SOON. GIVE ME THE CONTROLS. WE GOTTA MOVE, FAST!

FINE, BUT...

I SAW THEM COMING FROM THERE.

IF WE'RE LUCKY, BY HEADING OVER THERE, WE'LL FIND OTHER SURVIVORS.

WHAT?!

STAN, WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU? YOU NEARLY JUST DIED!

IF I'M RIGHT, HAIVÉ HAS BUILT HUNDREDS OF THOSE BASTARDS! IF IT SENDS THEM ALL YOUR WAY, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

I'VE GOT MY CLOAK. I'LL BE FINE.

FOR NOW, I'M STAYING AT THE CONTROLS. YOU CAN HELP ME... IF YOU WANT.

CLANG

CHK!

...

THAT WAY, SIX MILES OUT... THERE'S A MINE STILL IN OPERATION, APPARENTLY.

I THINK THAT'S IT.

DO YOU SEE ANY HUMANS?

HARD TO SAY. MAYBE IF I TOOK MY CLOAK OFF...

DON'T GET MAD! I WAS KIDDING.

STUFF'S MOVING, AND THERE'S ROBOTS, I KNOW THAT MUCH. WE GOTTA HEAD OVER THERE DISCREETLY.

YOU COULD ALSO JUST... NOT GO THERE AT ALL.

NO. WE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT THIS.

FINE. SO LONG AS YOU KEEP THE CLOAK ON, AND WE KEEP RADIO COMMS TO A MINIMUM, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH, UNSEEN.

EXCEPT...

I DON'T LIKE THAT THING.

WHAT THING?

THE WATCHTOWER, IN THE MIDDLE. H&J WERE ALWAYS A BIT PARANOID. WE GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT KIND OF SENSORS IT HAS...

PLUS, THAT FENCE SURROUNDS THE WHOLE COMPLEX. IF YOU BREAK THROUGH IT, ALL THE ROBOTS IN THE MINE WILL COME FOR YOU.

RCK'

KRKK RR K K

WELL...

MAYBE IF I CHUCK THIS FROM FAR ENOUGH AWAY...

KRASH

1101011!

10011?

WVVNNN

TOOM TOOM TOOM

KRAAK ?

PRANG

WHAT... ?

I TOOK CONTROL OF THE TURRET! PROTECT IT!

GOTCHA.

VNN NNN

KRASH

ANY LEFT?

I DON'T THINK SO...

BUT I WON'T HAVE CONTROL OVER THE CANNON FOR MUCH LONGER. IF YOU CAN DISCONNECT IT, SLOWLY...

"SLOWLY"? WE'LL SEE!

KRANG

THE ROCK FELL NEARBY. IT COULD STILL BE USEFUL...

THE TURRET AS WELL! IF REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE...

YOU'RE REALLY NOT...

STAN!

YOU FOUND US! YOU'RE AMAZING!

WELL... UH... YEAH. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO TURN THAT THING OFF, BY THE WAY?

I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!

YOU'RE ALL HERE? THAT'S GREAT!

OH, YEAH. I'M SURE SHERIFF'S THRILLED, FROM WHERE HE IS NOW...

C'MON, BLACKJACK. THAT'S ENOUGH GRUMBLING OUT OF YOU.

SO. THAT'S THE FAMOUS ROBOT, EH?

OH, YEAH! I GOTTA TELL YOU GUYS... YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT.

WELL... I'LL GO TELL THEM TO NOT BE AFRAID, FIRST.

YOU KNOW, THE OTHERS ARE... BIZARRE. IT WOULD BE A SURPRISE IF THEY LISTENED TO YOU.

MAGNUS?

I MAY WELL HAVE COME UP WITH HAIVÉ, BUT I UNDERSTAND IT LESS AND LESS.

IN NEO-TOLEDO... IT SHOWED NO PITY. ONLY THE LUCKIEST MANAGED TO FLEE...

AND NOW, IT'S TAKING PRISONERS? IT FEEDS THEM?

SO TO SPEAK.

EVERY DAY, A TRUCK COMES TO DELIVER US SOME KIND OF TASTELESS BROTH. JUST ENOUGH TO NOT DIE OF HUNGER, AND KEEP US WORKING.

WHAT SORT OF WORK?

CLEANING. MACHINES, THE GROUND, THE WALLS... THEY WANT THE PLACE SPOTLESS.

MANUAL LABOR. MULTI-TALENTED. LOW COST.

HUH?

HAIVÉ'S ALREADY WON. THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR FROM US.

SO, IT USES US.

IT KEEPS THE PRODUCTION LINES GOING BECAUSE THAT'S ITS REASON FOR BEING.

IT BUILDS NEW ROBOTS TO ENHANCE ITS POWER, AND ITS CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.

BUT THE MINERALS TAKE AGES TO EXTRACT. ENERGY ISN'T LIMITLESS. IF, TO CONTROL US, THEY JUST NEED TO FEED US STUFF THAT THE MACHINES WOULDN'T NEED ANYWAY...

I'D DO THE SAME THING IN ITS PLACE, TOO.

AH! ... RIGHT, THANKS! THANK YOU, HAIVÉ, THE MAGNANIMOUS BEING THAT DEIGNS TO KEEP US IN THE STONE AGE IN EXCHANGE FOR A FEW MEALS HERE AND THERE!

MAGNUS... THE ALBA LAUNCH PAD. IF I MANAGE TO GET THE ROCKET LAUNCHED WITH THE E.M.P. CANNON, EVERYTHING WILL CHANGE. AND YOU CAN HELP ME!

...

HELP YOU MAKE THINGS WORSE, YOU MEAN?

BUT...

DANIEL, I ALWAYS LIKED YOU A LOT. LET ME EXPLAIN.

WHEN HAIVÉ'S ROBOTS FOUND ME, I'D BEEN HIDING IN A BUNKER FOR THREE MONTHS. THERE WERE THIRTY-SEVEN OF US AT THE START. AFTER ONE MONTH, THE NUMBER OF LIVING PEOPLE STARTED TO DROP. WE ENDED UP AS ONLY TEN.

NO ONE DARED TO GO OUT. ANYTHING TO AVOID CONTACT WITH THE MACHINES. THE TASTE OF HUMAN FLESH. VIOLENCE. MADNESS.

BUT NOW, I UNDERSTAND.

UNDERSTAND WHAT?

THAT HAIVÉ PROBABLY NEVER MALFUNCTIONED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THAT IT MAYBE JUST REALIZED THAT IT HAD TO SAVE US FROM OURSELVES.

BY MASSACRING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE? BY REDUCING THE REST INTO SLAVES?

STAN, I THINK IT'S TIME WE GO.

IF SOME OF THEM WANT TO STAY HERE, SO BE IT. THE OTHERS CAN FOLLOW US. THEIR HELP WON'T GO AMISS.

WHO'S WITH US?

I RESPECT YOUR DECISION, BUT I HAVE MY FAMILY TO THINK ABOUT...

I DUNNO. IT SEEMS REALLY RISKY TO ME.

SORRY, STAN, BUT... YOU'VE GOT YOUR DAD LOOKING OUT FOR YOU NOW. I'D BE A BURDEN.

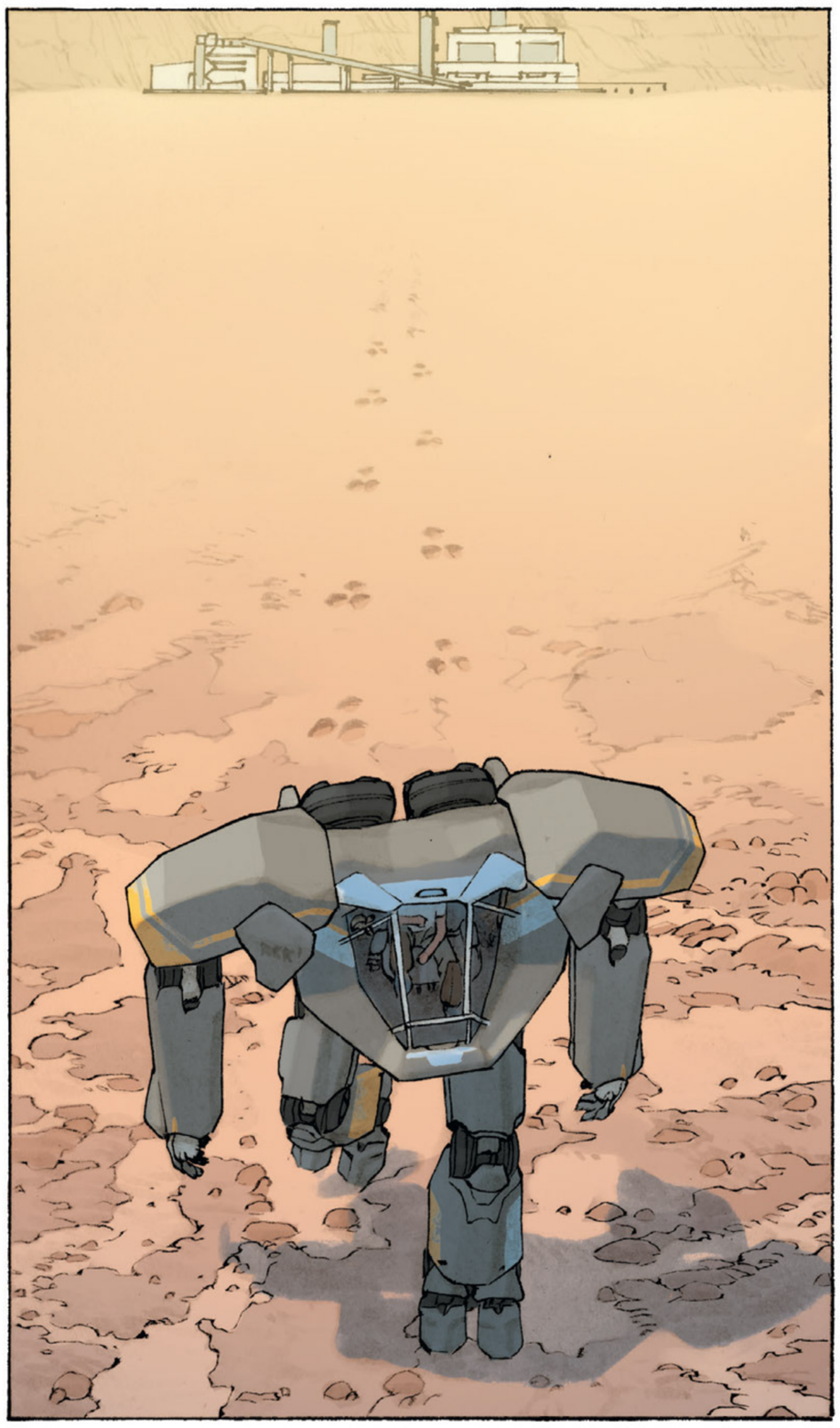
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ALL. WHAT A BUNCH OF COWARDS! GO ON AHEAD, I'LL SHAKE SOME SENSE INTO THEM...

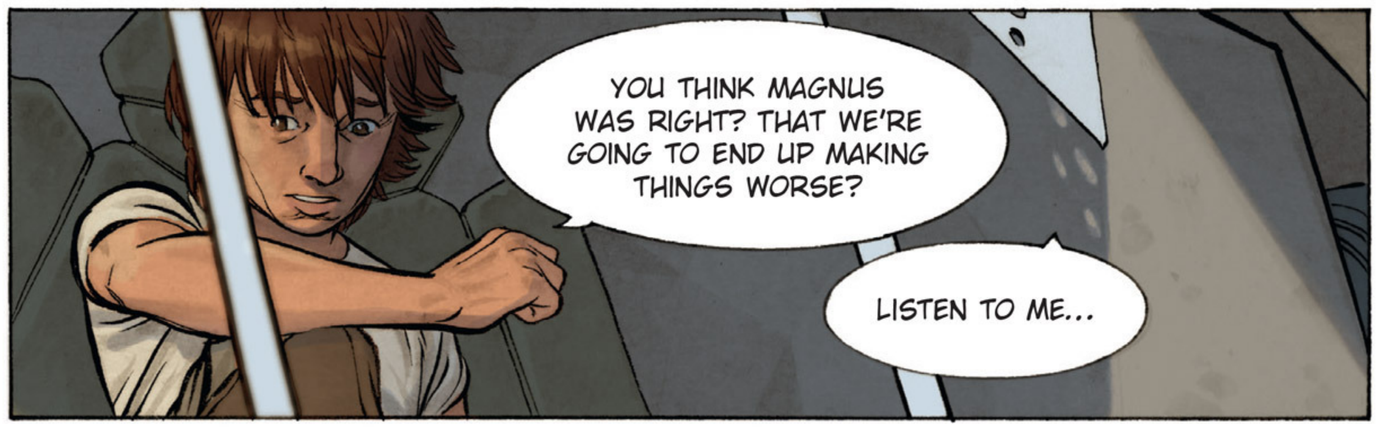
OK.

OTHER ROBOTS ARE PROBABLY HEADED THIS WAY.

CLANG

YOU CAN STILL CHANGE YOUR MINDS.

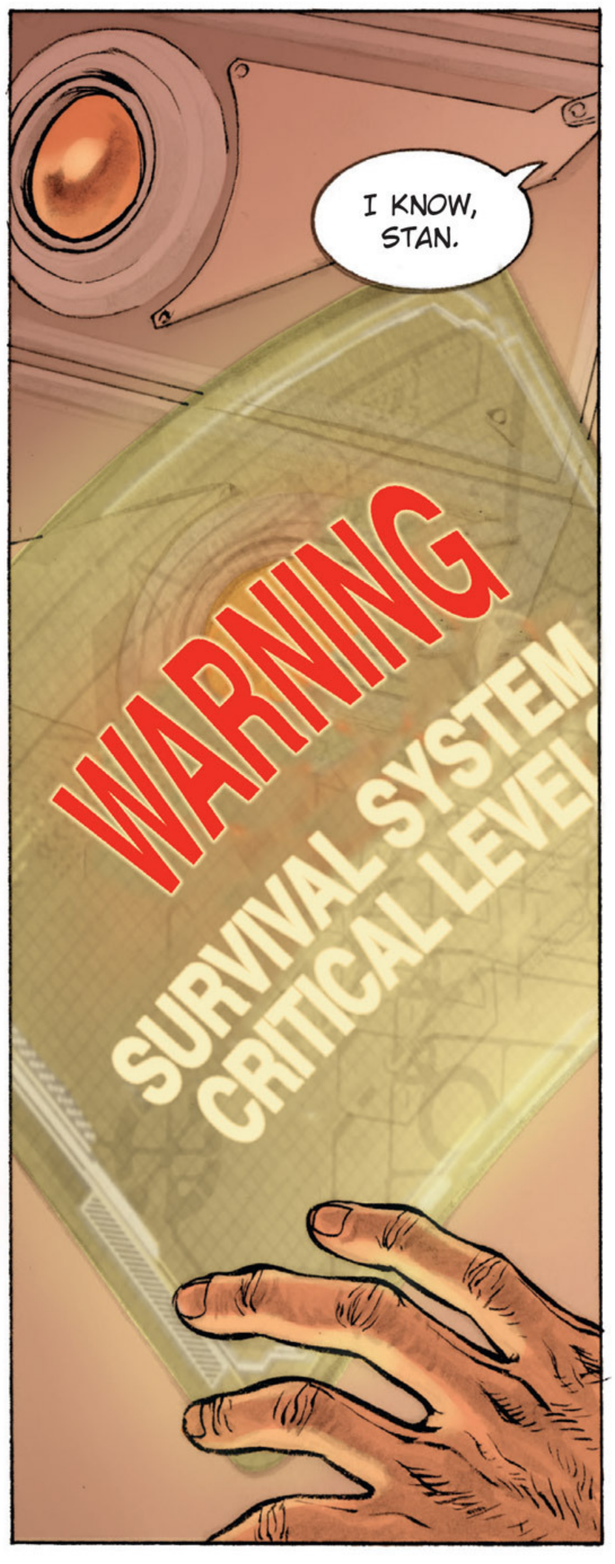


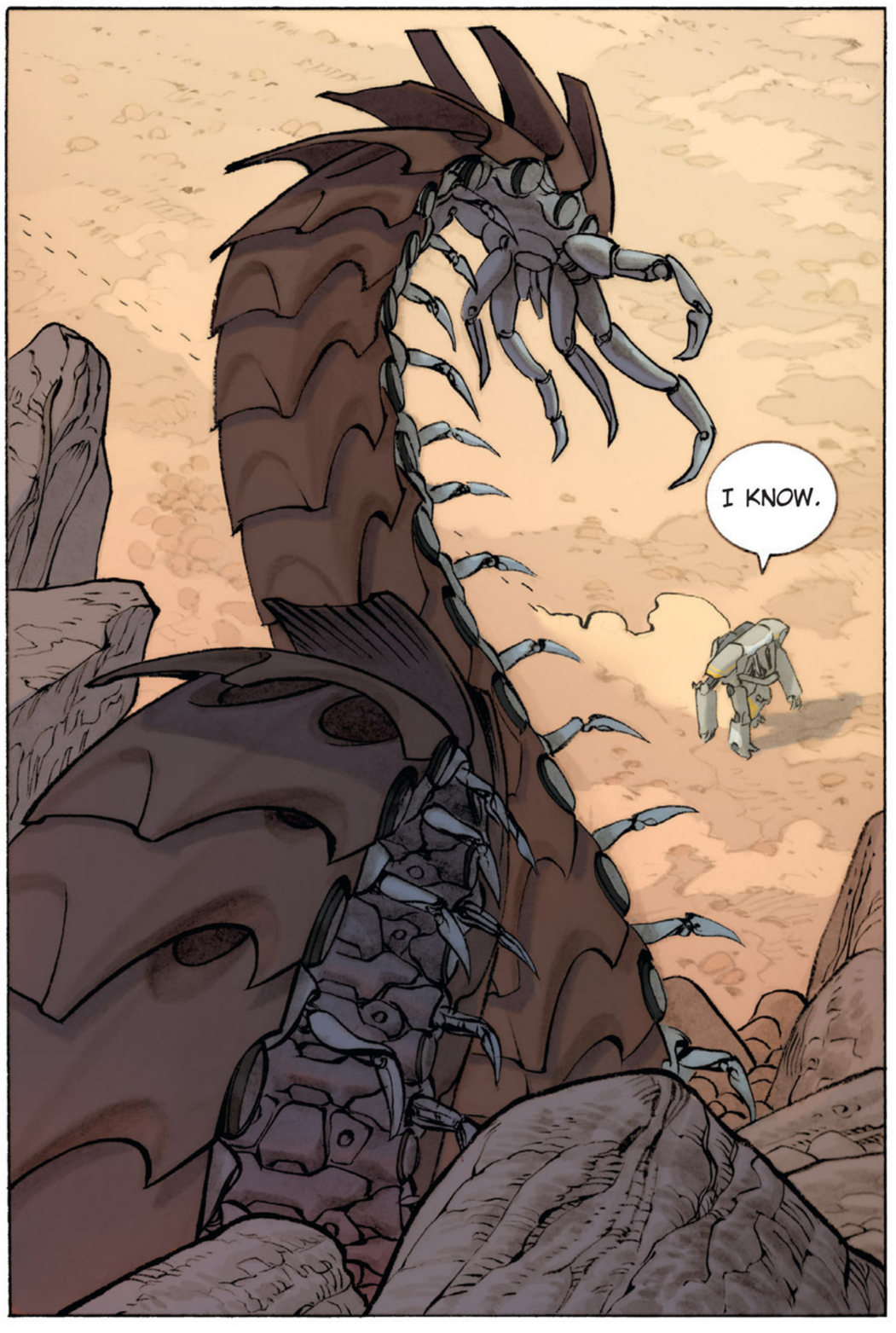

YOU THINK MAGNUS WAS RIGHT? THAT WE'RE GOING TO END UP MAKING THINGS WORSE?
LISTEN TO ME...

IF ANYONE MADE THINGS WORSE, IT WAS ME. MAGNUS. A.I.U.M.. THE ENTIRE COMPANY...
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO BEAT YOURSELF UP ABOUT.

MAYBE IN ATTACKING HAIVÉ, IT'LL TAKE REVENGE. BUT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. AND IT'S YOUR LIFE THAT'S AT STAKE HERE. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO DEFEND YOURSELF.
YOURS TOO. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.

WARNING
SURVIVAL SYSTEM
CRITICAL LEVELS


I KNOW, STAN.
WARNING
SURVIVAL SYSTEM
CRITICAL LEVEL


I KNOW.

IS THAT THE ALBA BASE? NOT VERY IMPRESSIVE.

C'MON, MOVE...

WE'LL SOON SEE WHAT IT'S GOT IN STORE FOR US.

EVERYONE'S FLED, IT LOOKS LIKE...

STAY CLOSE TO ME. AT THE FIRST SIGN OF DANGER, PUT YOUR CLOAK BACK ON.

?

HEY!

THIS GUN LOOKS PRETTY COOL. I WONDER IF IT'S LOADED...

PUT THAT DOWN RIGHT NOW! THE LAUNCH HANGAR IS OVER THERE.

"PUT THAT DOWN RIGHT NOW", BLAH, BLAH, BLAH...

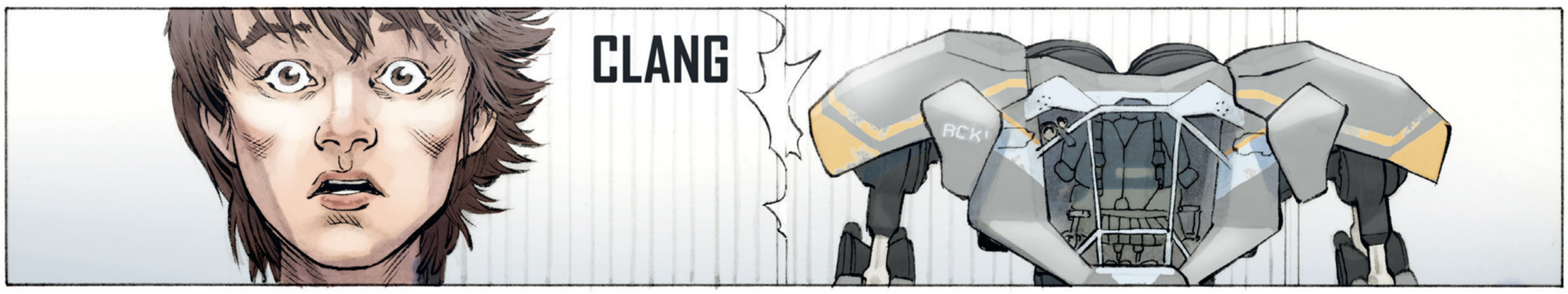
DO YOU THINK THE ROCKET'S IN THERE?

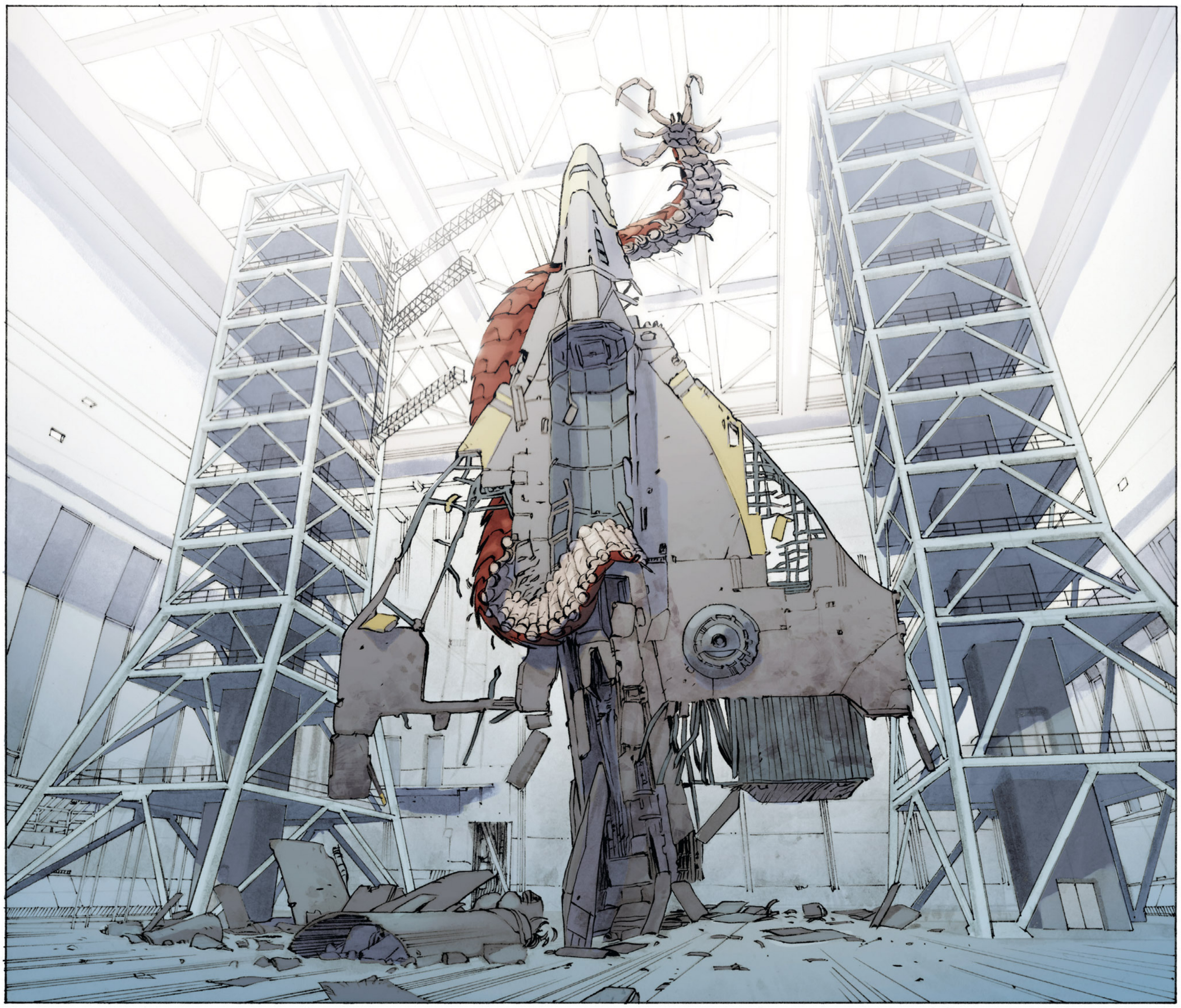
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON...

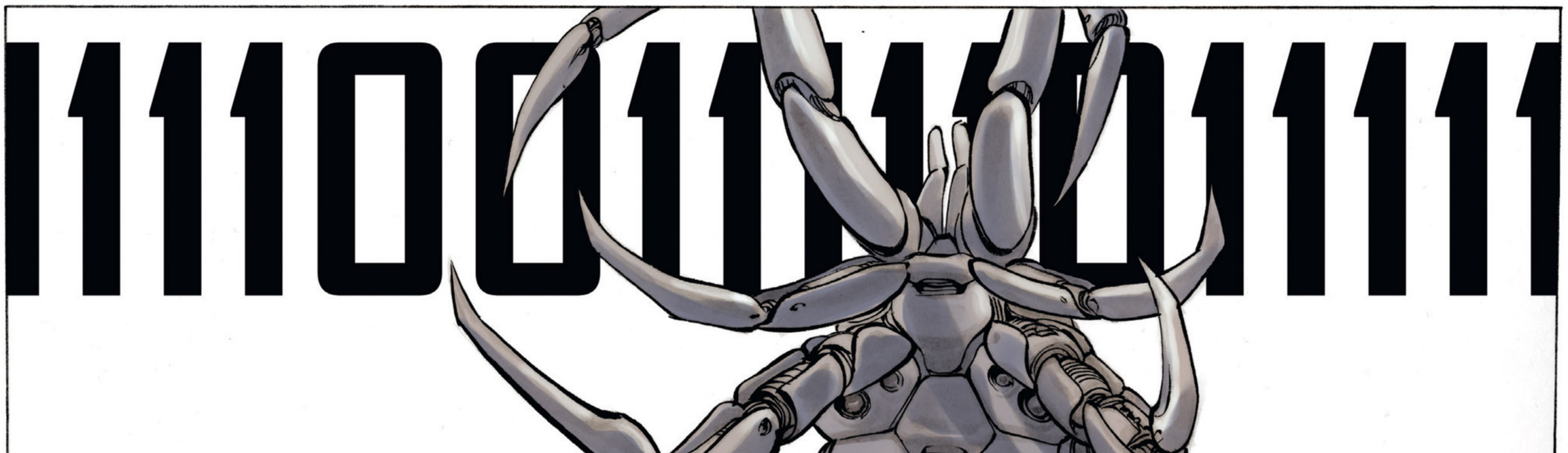
I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.

THERE'S GOT TO BE A LIGHT SWITCH. LOOK AROUND!

CLIK!


CLANG




1110011101111

PANG PANG

YOU OKAY, BACK THERE? WE'RE NEARLY THERE!

DON'T WORRY. HURRY UP!

MMM, WELL, LET ME REMIND YOU THAT I DIDN'T VOLUNTEER FOR YOUR LITTLE SUICIDE MISSION. BUT SINCE NO ONE SEEMS TO CARE...

WE'VE ARRIVED!

STAN! ARE YOU HERE?

PIPE DOWN!

THE ROCKET'S IN THAT HANGAR.

THEY'RE PROBABLY IN THERE. LET'S GO!

YOU THINK THAT STAN'S FATHER CAN MAKE IT TAKE OFF?

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. GO FIND OUT.

STOP... DO YOU HEAR THAT?

PRANG!!

KRASH

GET AWAY...

NOW!

\\OOOIIII!!!

SANDY!

MOVE!

AAAAA

ZING

!!!!!!!

NO!

YAAAAAAAA

ZT!

KRASH!

AN E.M.P. GUN?

STAN, I'M SORRY... IF I'D KNOWN...

FORGET IT.

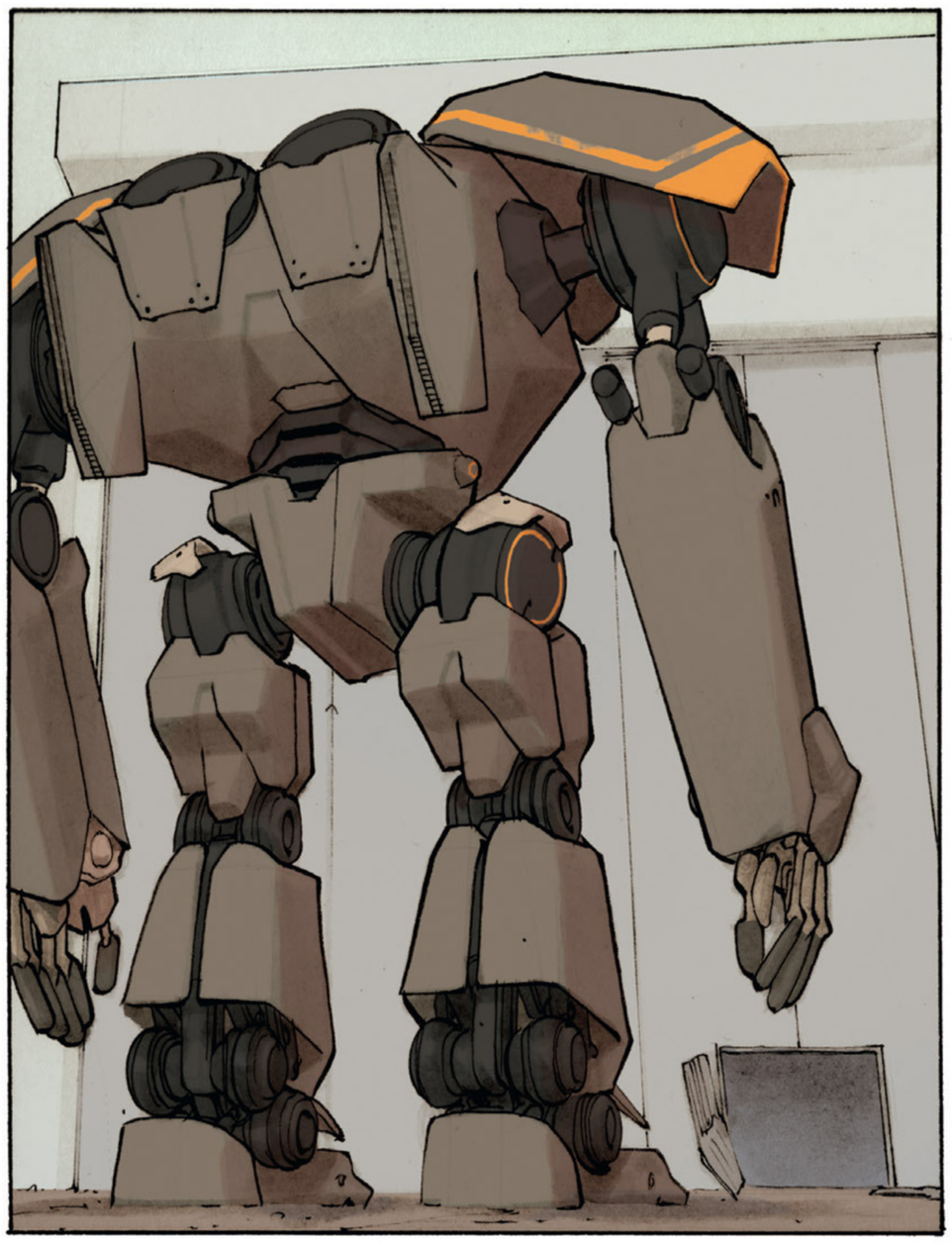
A LITTLE BROTHER TO THE CANNON MEANT FOR THE SATELLITE. WE HAD ENOUGH TIME TO BUILD A COUPLE OF THEM. BUT THEY'RE JUST PROTOTYPES. THEY AREN'T TERRIBLY RELIABLE.

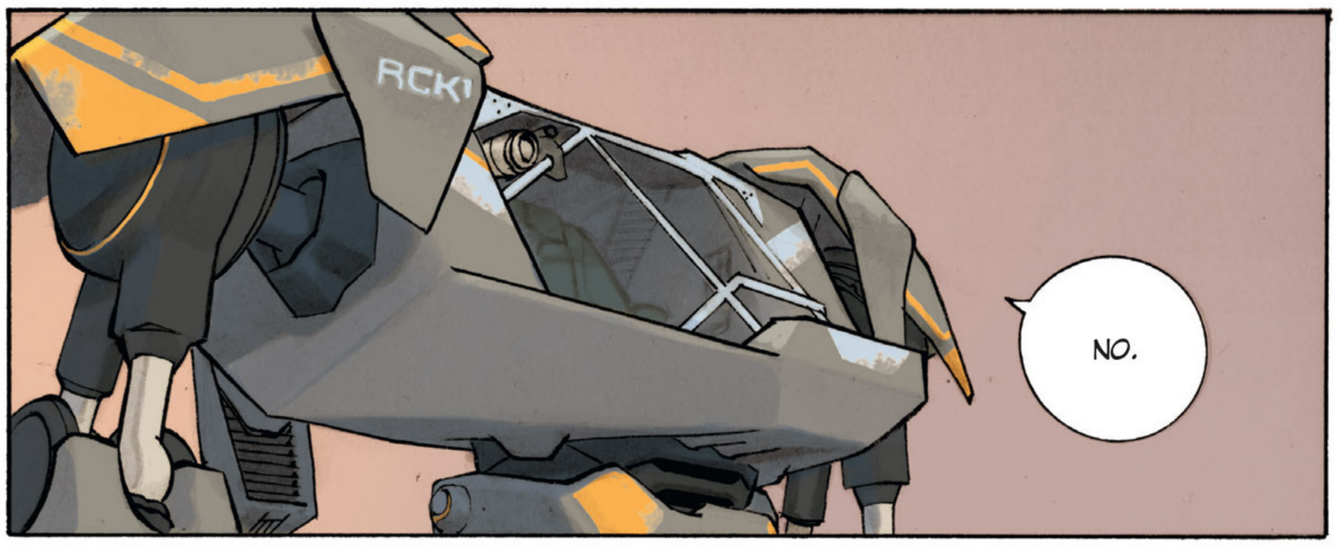
IN ANY CASE, THANKS FOR TRYING.

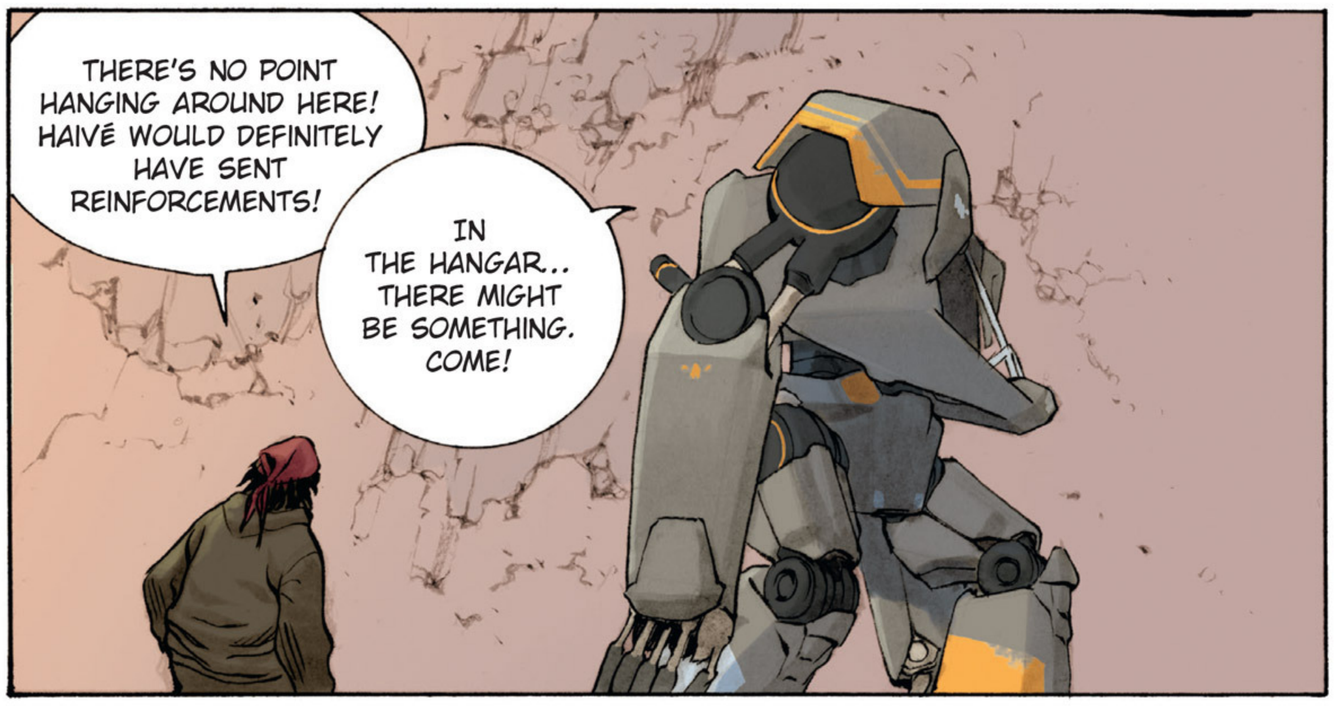
WHAT ABOUT THE ROCKET, THEN? WILL YOU LAUNCH IT? SO BLACKJACK DIDN'T DIE IN VAIN??

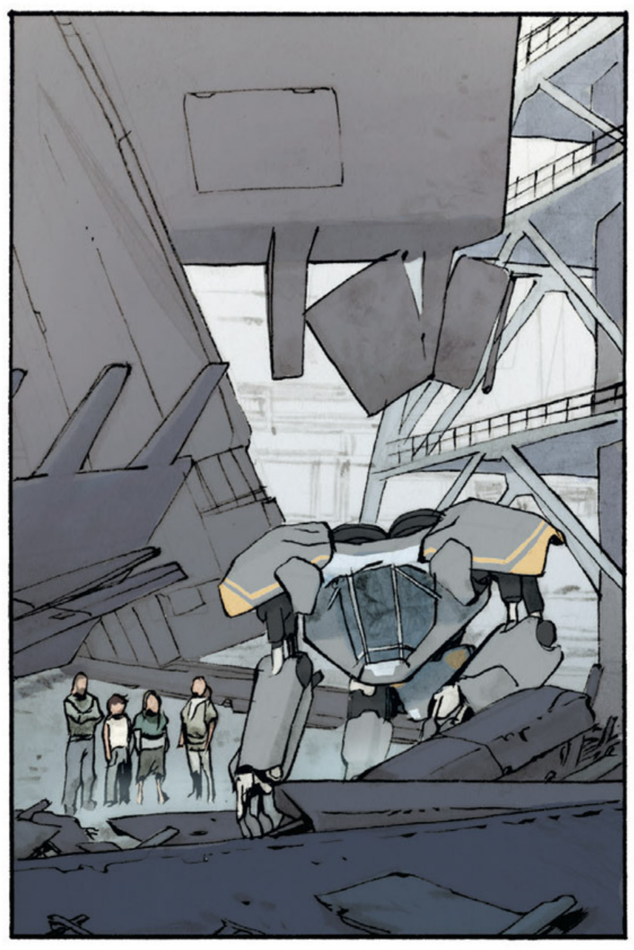
THE CENTIPEDE DESTROYED IT.

WE CAME FOR NOTHING.



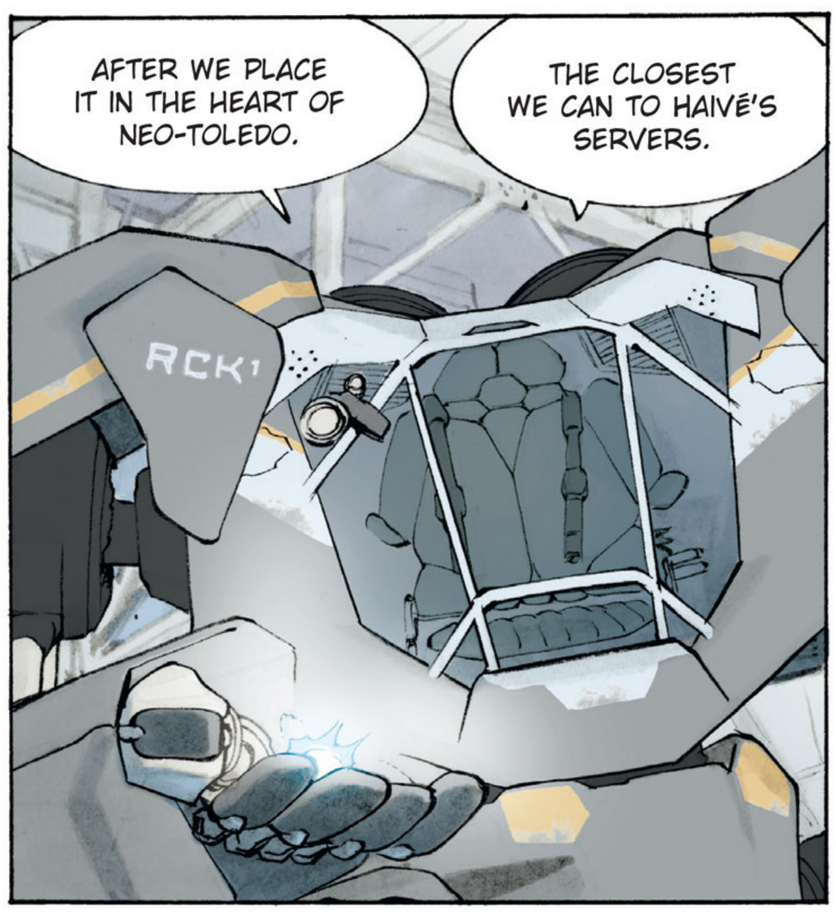

RCK1
NO.

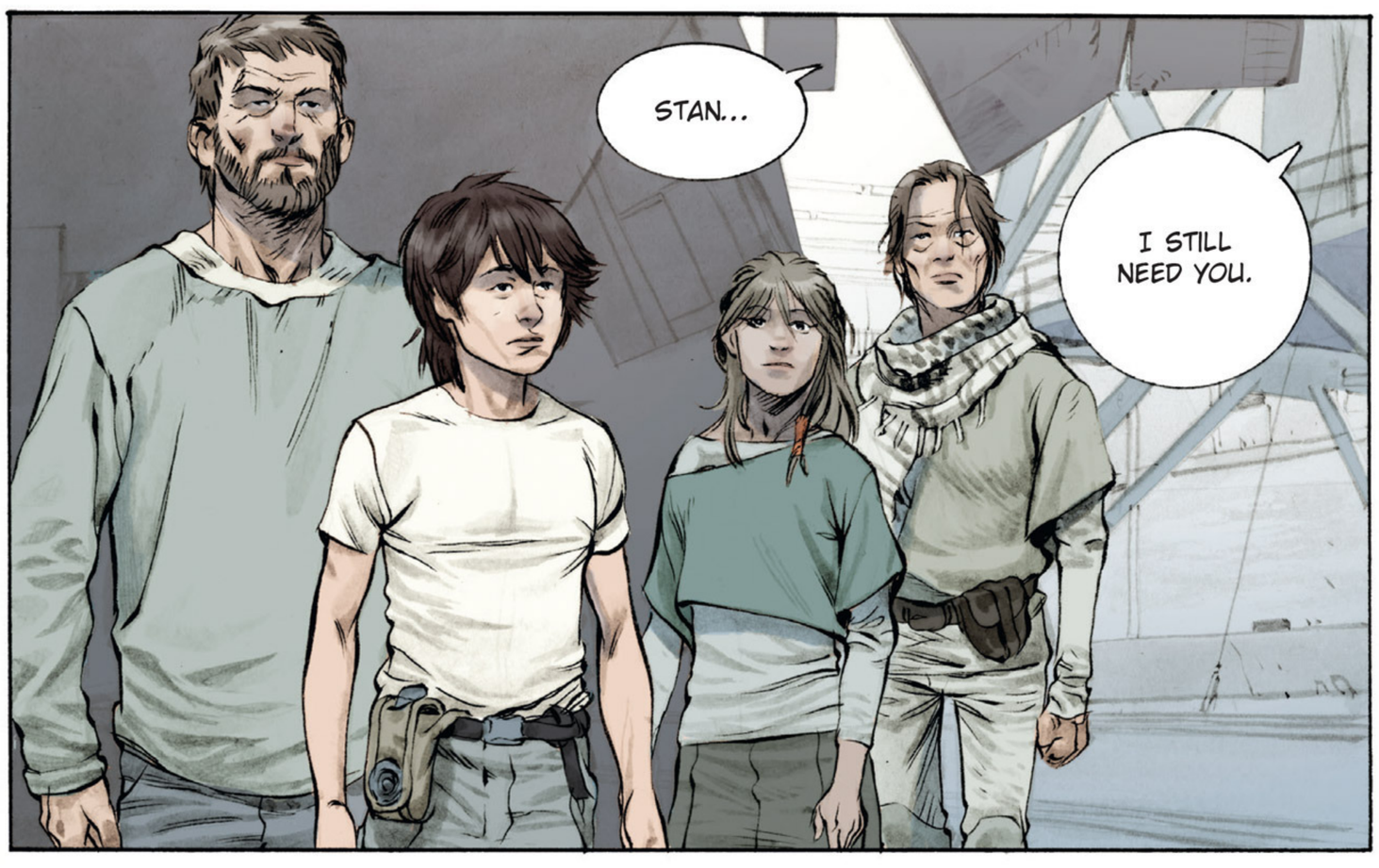

THERE'S NO POINT HANGING AROUND HERE! HAIVÉ WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE SENT REINFORCEMENTS!
IN THE HANGAR.. THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING. COME!



There!

THE E.M.P. CORE? IT'S PRETTY, BUT WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WITH IT, WITHOUT A CANNON?
BOMBARD IT WITH MICROWAVES FROM THE SATELLITE...


AFTER WE PLACE IT IN THE HEART OF NEO-TOLEDO.
THE CLOSEST WE CAN TO HAIVÉ'S SERVERS.
RCK1


STAN...
I STILL NEED YOU.

00011

AI!

MAGNUS? WHERE'D YOU GO?

YOU FOUND THE OTHER E.M.P. GUNS?

YEAH.

THEY'RE COMING.

STAN, DANIEL... YOU GOTTA GO. TAKE THE CORE, AND THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK.

THE REST OF US, IT'S BETTER IF WE STAY HERE. ALL WE CAN DO IS HOPE TO DISTRACT HAIVÉ'S ATTENTION.

C'MON.

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS.

I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE SO... CALM OUT HERE.

MOST OF THE MACHINES AROUND YOU ARE IN STANDBY MODE. HAIVÉ'S SAVING ENERGY. IT'S CONCENTRATED ITS RESOURCES WHERE IT NEEDS THEM MOST...

WHILE YOU CONTROL ROCKY UNDER THE CLOAK, HE LOOKS LIKE ANY OTHER ROBOT. IT'D BE BEST TO AVOID DRAWING ATTENTION...

IS THE SERVER BUILDING FAR FROM HERE?

JUST UNDER A MILE. YOU SHOULD BE ARRIVING AT AN INTERSECTION SOON. YOU GOTTA TAKE A LEFT...

WAIT...

STAN! MILITARY VEHICLES! THEY'RE HEADED RIGHT FOR YOU!

VVVVVVRRRRRNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN

VRRRRNNN

FALSE ALARM, LOOKS LIKE.

APPARENTLY. THEY'RE HEADED TOWARDS THE ALBA BASE. IF THEY GET THERE BEFORE WE'VE NEUTRALIZED HAIVÉ...

GOT IT. HURRYING UP...

1101

WHAT THE... ?

1101

1101

1101

1101

1101

1101

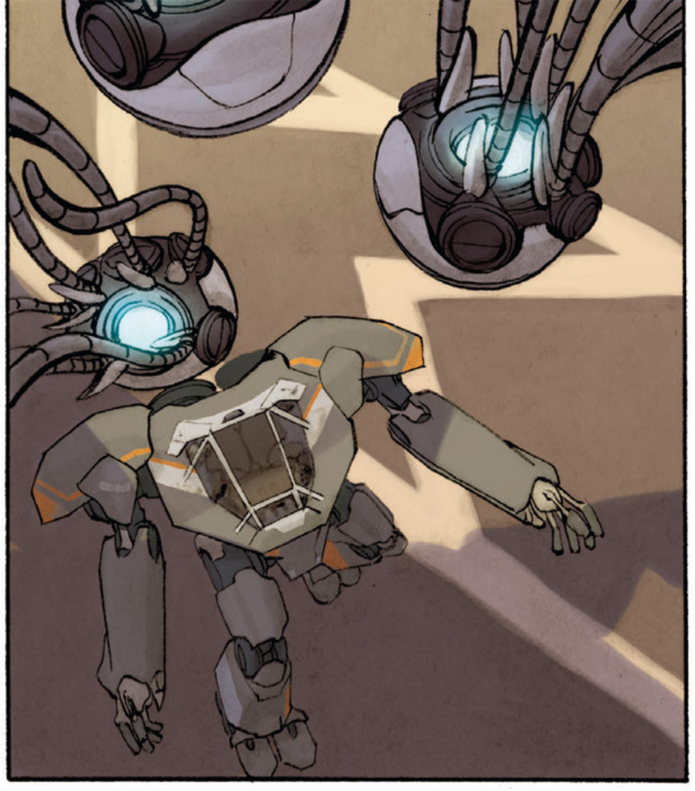
1101

1101

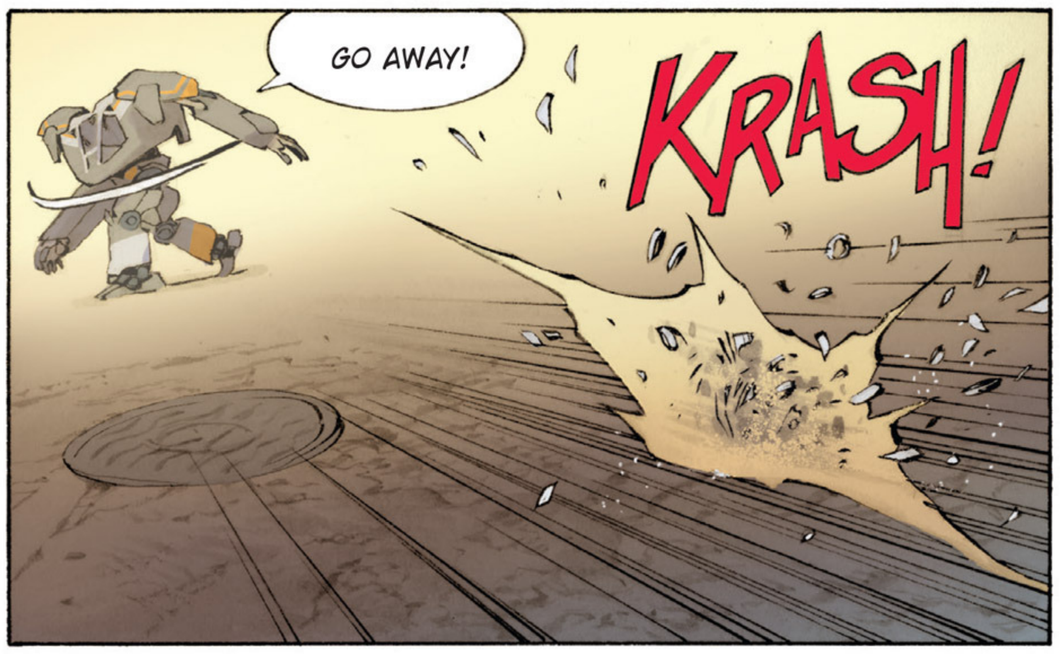
1101

1101

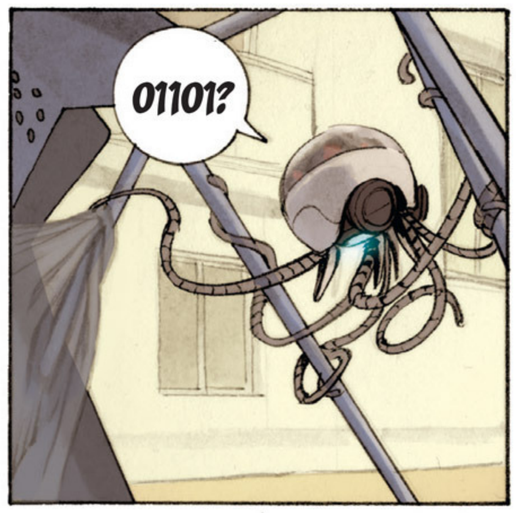
1101

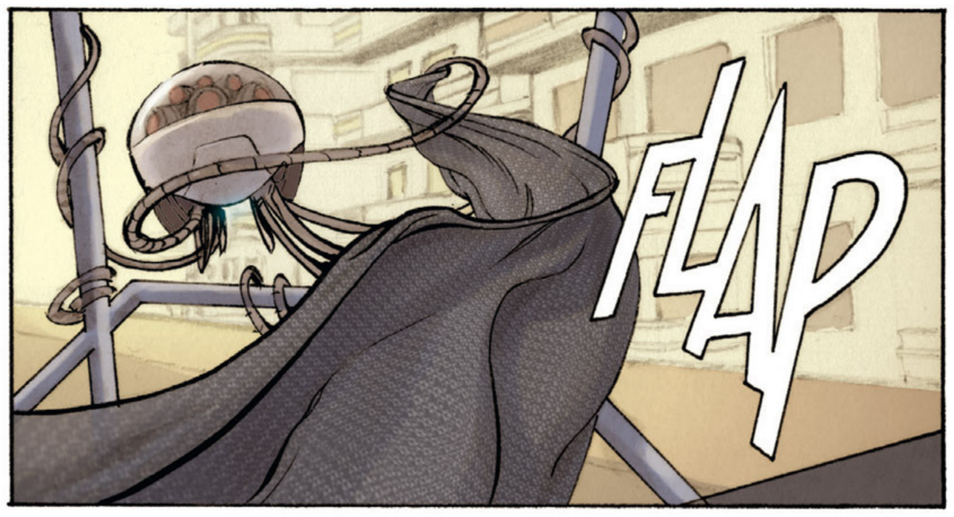


0011!

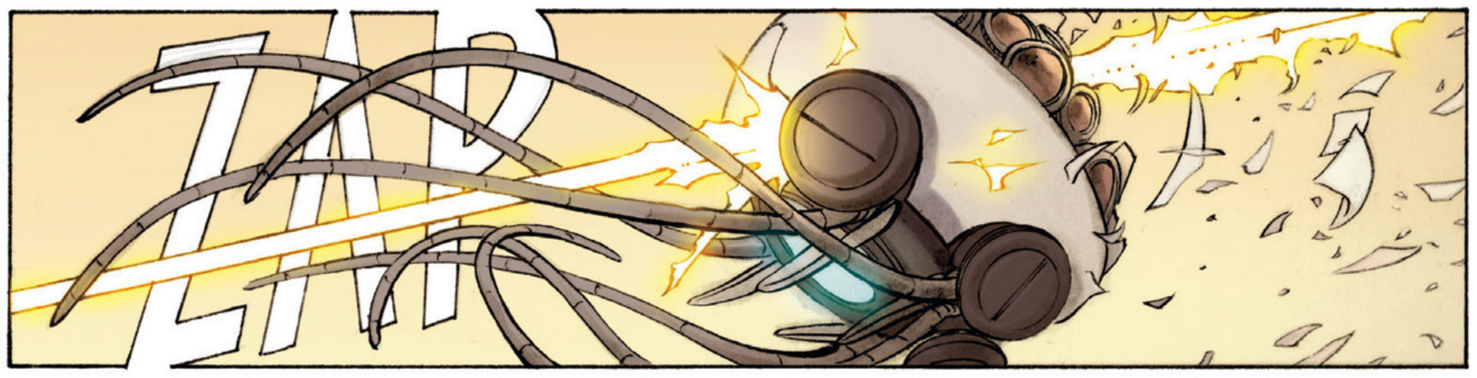

GO AWAY!
KRASH!

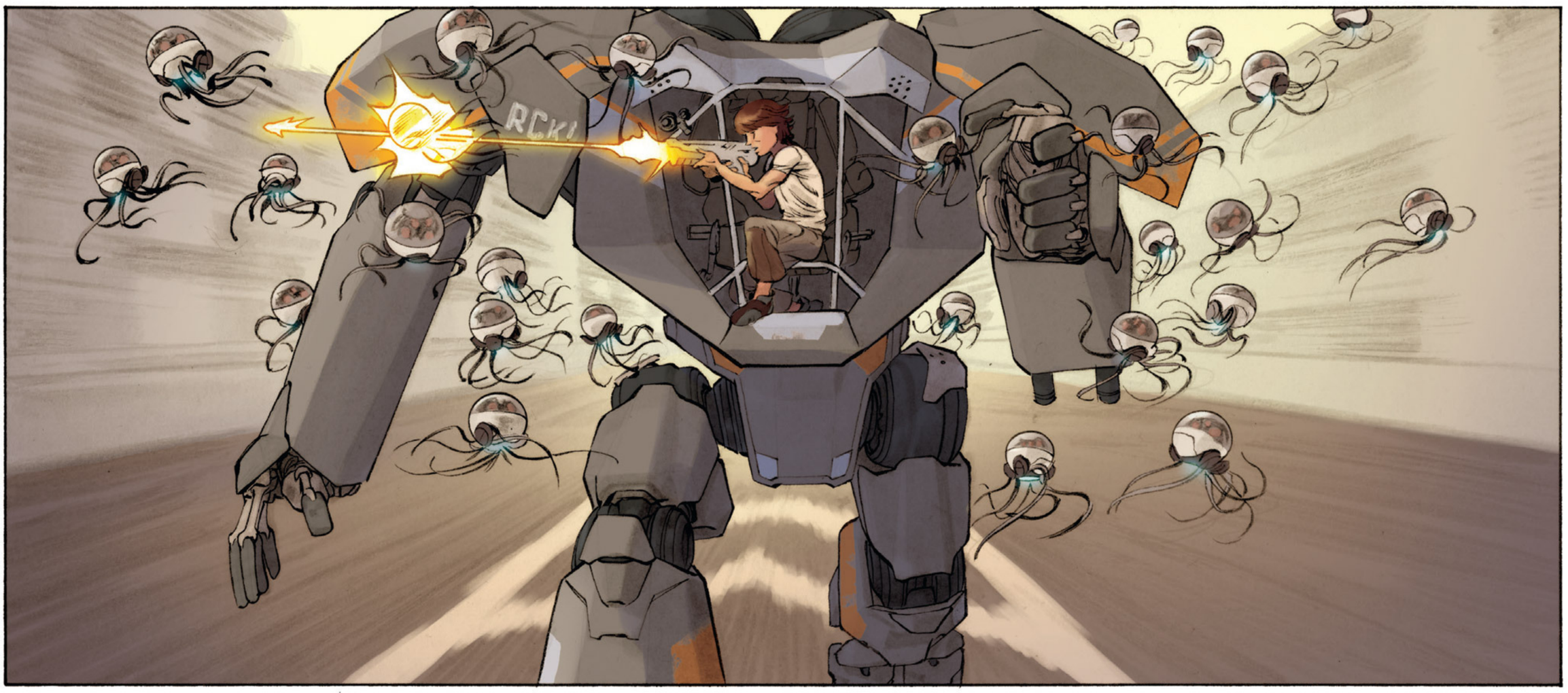
111!
111!
GET OUT OF THERE!
111!


01101?


FLAP

BASTARD.


ZAP


RCK!

UMTUMTUMTUM

IT SEEMS LIKE THEY STOPPED FOLLOWING US.

THEY DID THEIR JOB. IT WOULD SURPRISE ME IF HAIVÉ LEAVES IT AT THAT...

STRAIGHT AHEAD!

ZAP

SHIT!

THE GUN'S OUT!

HANG ON, WE'RE NEARLY THERE. TURN LEFT HERE...

?!

THERE'S ANOTHER ONE.

I GOT IT.

VVVVVVVVVV

ZAP

KRASH

WITH SUCH GUNS, I DON'T GET HOW WE DIDN'T WIN THE WAR.

I TOLD YOU. THEY AREN'T RELIABLE. YOU'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR.

PLUS, THESE ROBOTS BUILT BY HAIVÉ ARE ALMOST... ORGANIC. THEIR CIRCUITS ARE EXPOSED. AGAINST SOME PROPER HEAVY ARMOR, THIS GUN WOULD BE AS USEFUL AS A WATER PISTOL.

AH.

I HAVE GOOD NEWS... AND BAD.

GOOD NEWS, IS THAT HAIVÉ FINALLY DECIDED TO THIN OUT ITS DEFENSES. THAT SHOULD MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR DANIEL AND HIS SON.

THE BAD NEWS...

WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO DIE.

STAN! TAKE THE E.M.P. CORE AND GET OUTTA THERE!

BUT...

NOW!

KRANG

THEY'RE HEADED FOR THE WALL!

MY GUN'S TOAST!

THERE! TO YOUR LEFT!

SHIT.

KLANG

BRT BRT BRT BRT BRT

000101!

STAN! THE E.M.P. CORE! QUICK!!

HANG TIGHT! I GOTTA LOCK THE BEAM!

MICROWAVE EMISSION TOWARDS RCK1. NOW!

Negative.

WHAT?

energy resources – insufficient.

HUH? THE LEVELS ARE FINE. I CHECKED!

simultaneous beam and survival system – impossible.

priority mission – host survival.

DAD?

PRIORITY MISSION, MY ASS!

FIRE!

Sir – you're hurt. Do you require assistance?

HUH?

IT WORKED? ARE YOU NORMAL?

I do not understand "normal", sir. Do you wish me to take you to the nearest medical center?

NO, IT'S... IT'S OK. CAN YOU FIX THIS RCK1?

Negative, sir – it's too damaged.

JUST THE RADIO, THEN! C'MON!

DAD?

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

S...
STAN?

DAD!
WE DID IT!

WE'LL COME GET YOU... I'LL FIND A WAY.

THERE'S NO POINT.

THE SURVIVAL SYSTEM... I HAD TO DISCONNECT IT. IT WAS BEYOND REPAIR, ANYHOW...

BUT...

STAN, PLEASE... LISTEN TO ME. THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME LEFT...

BEING VAIN... EGOTISTICAL... NOT ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING...

EXCEPT ONE THING...

YOU. MY SON.

I LOVE YOU.

DAD... ?

EIGHT YEARS LATER.

USED PARTS

STAN!

HELLO, MISS.

I'M DONE OUT HERE. I HOPE THAT THE SOLDERING WILL HOLD, THIS TIME.

GOOD DAY AT THE FARM?

MMM, YEAH. MAGNUS AND ANNA FOUGHT AGAIN, BUT NO ONE REALLY PAID THEM ANY ATTENTION.

VRRN

SOMEONE TOLD THEM THAT WHEN H&J COMES BACK, THEY'LL GET EVERYONE BACK ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH. THAT SEEMED TO SHUT THEM UP.

YEAH. THE LATER, THE BETTER...

THE ISOLATION IS WEIGHING ON THEM. A SELF-SUFFICIENT LIFESTYLE IS NICE AND ALL, BUT A LOT OF THEM WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE SOME NEW FACES.

I MEAN, I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT...

I KNOW! WE'LL GO BACK HOME. WE'LL RUN A NICE BATH. AND THEN: REPOPULATE THE PLANET!

THAT DOESN'T SEEM TOO COMPLICATED.

WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT... I GUESS SO.

END.

JEAN VALEANÍ GEORGES